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Action required	Discussion and decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>20. General Assembly adopts the statement of ‘Confession and Apology by the United Reformed Church’ prepared by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group, and commits the Church to sharing the confession and apology widely, both within and beyond the URC, including with our global partners in Africa and the Caribbean.</p> <p>21. General Assembly affirms its commitment to practical actions to address the continuing negative impacts of the legacies of transatlantic slavery on black communities in the UK, the Caribbean and Africa, and instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to bring concrete and costed proposals to General Assembly 2023 for a considered programme of repairing justice.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of the Legacies of Slavery Task Group. Adoption of resolutions arising from this work.
Main points	General Assembly is asked to adopt a proposed ‘Confession and Apology’ in response to the legacies of transatlantic slavery; to commit the URC to implementing a programme of ‘repairing justice’; and to instruct the Task Group to bring firm proposals for repairing justice to General Assembly 2023.

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action in the form of reparations or reparative justice for black communities who continue to experience racism and deprivation in Africa, the Caribbean, and the UK.

- 1.3 Mission Council received 'Healing: Hope in Action' warmly, but asked the task group to do further work, including wider consultation, bringing proposals to General Assembly 2021. This was rendered impossible by the pandemic. It seemed fitting, then, to consider the issues at General Assembly 2022, given our biblical understanding of jubilee. Meanwhile, the disproportionate damage caused by Covid-19 to black and ethnic minority British communities, as well as the 'Black Lives Matter' movement stimulated by the murder of George Floyd, have highlighted the continuing scourge of systemic racism and the need to make the URC actively anti-racist.
- 1.4 Our ecumenical partners are wrestling with these issues, too. Concerns and strategies are shared between member churches of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), Churches Together in England (CTE) and the Racial Justice Advocacy Forum (RJAF).¹ An apology was offered by the Baptist Union in 2007, who are now exploring the issue of reparations in conversation with the URC. The Methodist Church in Britain is also moving firmly in this direction, drawing on materials produced by the URC and showing great interest in our journey to date. Mutual learning continues between churches under the CWM umbrella, including within the UK and Europe, and in conversation with our Caribbean partners in particular.
- 1.5 In preparation for General Assembly 2022, the LoS Task Group consulted with Synods and local churches on the proposals for a URC Apology and reparations, including an invitation to engage with the related issues through 'Black History Monthly' online sessions throughout 2021, and the offer of local conversations facilitated by members of the Task Group, Cascades of Grace, or Racial Justice Advocates. Responses have been both verbal and written. Verbal responses have been overwhelmingly supportive. Of approximately 75 written submissions received by 16 May 2022, there is more than two-thirds support for the proposals; there is also deep scepticism in some quarters about their relevance today. Comments such as 'slavery was a long time ago; it wasn't my fault; proposals are just wokery', have been received. It should be noted that several of the negative responses were phrased in a way that caused real hurt to black members of the

group who were tasked with reading them. They shocked all of us by their tone and content.

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- 2.3 To this end, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, gathered here in Swanwick in the year 2022:

humbly acknowledges our share in and benefit from our nation's participation, and that of some of our own antecedent bodies, in transatlantic slavery.

recognises our failure to honour the efforts of our abolitionist forebears by

permitting the legacies of transatlantic slavery to continue shaping our world

offers our apology to God and to our sisters and brothers in Africa, the Caribbean, and their descendants, for all that has created and still perpetuates such deep hurt, which originated from the horror of slavery.

repents of the hurt we have caused, our reluctance to face up to the sins of the past and our silence in the face of racism and injustice today.

admits that these sins are part of our continuing failure to see and hear God in all our neighbours, whoever they may be.

commits, in a true spirit of repentance:

to find constructive ways by which we can move from saying 'I'm sorry' into concrete actions of 'repairing justice' and so contribute to the prophetic work of God's coming kingdom

to continue working to promote racial justice as part of our Christian commitment to justice for all

to encourage the whole United Reformed Church to be engaged in this journey.

3. The URC's commitment to 'repairing justice'

- 3.1 The Legacies of Slavery (LoS) Task Group has been consistently clear that 'Confession and Apology' without some form of practical action is an empty gesture, amounting to 'cheap grace'. Our expressions of apology must be accompanied by acts of 'repairing justice' – efforts which attempt some degree of 'putting right' without implying a direct payback, which would be impossible. Repairing justice is needed to show the world – and ourselves – that we are serious about the apology offered and wish to make amends for the injustices of the past which continue to shape the present. It will necessarily require some financial commitment, but

